

**Health and Wellness Committee  
Commission on Aging  
July 10, 2023  
401 Hungerford Drive, Rockville, MD 20850  
10:30AM-Noon**

**MEETING NOTES**

Attending: Virginia Cain, Joyce Dubrow, David Engel, Kendell Matthews, Laurie Pross, Marcia Pruzan, Marsha Weber. HHS Staff: Tina Purser Langley

**APPROVAL OF PRIOR MEETING MINUTES:** the group approved meeting minutes from June 6 and July 20, 2023.

**DECISIONS FOR TWO COMMITTEE BUDGET PRIORITIES**

1. Funding for a position to monitor and implement workforce proposals and projects that help to reduce workforce shortages for home care aides.

Discussion: The committee discussed this topic in depth at the June 20 meeting. In addition, Jo Ann Lynn had given a forceful presentation to the COA on this topic; her presentation was broad and included interrelated topics such as housing, transportation, cluster care. This committee, needing to be purposeful in its approach, is focusing on this specific, achievable action relative to its mission.

2. Early Stage Memory Loss Program. Additional funding for Kensington Club. During the pandemic, programs went virtual; County is now looking for additional in-person sites. It costs about \$120,000 to run each site, which provides a served meal and caregiver respite for 4 hours per week. Maryland Department of Aging provided additional funding for Germantown for one year, which will be lost after the one year. Additional funds are needed for both the Germantown, White Oak and potentially to expand in other areas.

Betsy Carrier also had suggested a budget request for a database to match those seeking low- and moderate-income housing with available those seeking housing. Tina noted that such a database does exist within the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) and that there also is an online rental housing marketplace that includes available HOC housing. The group agreed that housing in general falls within purview of the Aging in Community Committee, which Betsy co-chairs.

Review of last year's COA budget requests: Tina and David provided an overview of last year's recommendations:

1. Monitor progress Access HEARS –An update report on this program's progress is due in September.
2. Increase funding for mental health for outreach team to reduce waiting lists

3. Increase funding for In-home Aide Services (IHAS)
4. Increase funding for respite care
5. Social worker in villages (funded under ARPA)
6. Increase funding for medical adult day care
7. Increase funding for foster care

In addition, ARPA funds have allowed \$25,000 for mobile dental vans at two new HOC and senior center properties, and \$25,000 for new dentures.

### **ADVOCACY ISSUE**

Older Adult Immunization: Kendell suggested that this committee investigate how the County plans to promote and implement fall vaccinations for older adults for the full range of vaccinations they should be receiving, including COVID, RSV, shingles, pneumococcal pneumonia. This is a good time to begin any effort for fall vaccination. The committee may invite a discussion with Dr. Bridgers and staff to find out what plans are in place. As this may be in large part a communication issue, this should be brought to attention of the COAs and Age-Friendly Communication Committees, both of which Jean Dinwiddie co-chairs.

### **COMMITTEE FOCUS FOR COMING YEAR:**

Mental Health. After extensive discussion of related issues, the group decided to make mental health a focus for the coming year. Virginia noted that this health issue is chronically underfunded. The Commission heard a presentation on this topic by HHS's Josie Makon, the County's Older Adult Behavioral Health Coordinator, and Margo Quinlan, Director of Youth and Older Adults policy at the Maryland Mental Health Association. Laurie suggested including a psychiatric geriatrician in future discussions of this topic

### **OTHER POTENTIAL AREAS FOR ADVOCACY – DISCUSSION**

Staff for Respite Care: Virginia asked about needed respite care staff; Tina noted that Patrice McGhee had asked for and received additional funding for this via both ARPA and the state. ARPA funding is for only a limited time, and additional future funds will be necessary to keep in place those projects currently funded under ARPA.

Social Isolation. In response to Kendell's inquiry, Tina noted a few current projects relevant to this topic:

- 150 tablets are being distributed through partners; they contain evidence-based health and wellness programs. Senior Planet is helping train older adults with some of the programs.
- Chromebooks are being distributed through the office of technology services.
- ARPA are being used with recreation centers to encourage older adults to get back to centers for in-person programming.
- The PEARLS program, a mental health, peer to peer training program for seniors with mental health programs, is moving slowly, probably mostly due to the commitment of a 6–8-week

program. HHS makes referrals to this program. Kendell noted that some of these programs meet at 5-7 PM, a time not appropriate for older attendees.

Senior Fellow Program. Marsha Weber and Monica Schaeffer have been working on this. Marcia explained how the program currently works and noted that despite the many structural impediments, the fellowships remain attractive and popular. This project is on hold until the background research can be completed and the COA can identify its specific recommendations.

Long Term Care. This is an advocacy issue and a good area of inquiry for the new MDOA secretary.

## **UPDATES**

Maryland National Multisector Plan on Aging. Patrice and Shawn are working with state on this plan and will keep us informed. Marcia received a note from Patrice assuring that the plan will enhance rather than replace the County's Age-Friendly efforts.

Older Americans Act. The Act is up for review with comments due August 15. This would be under purview of the Public Policy committee.

Life Transitions Documents Update: Fact sheets currently are being printed; print shop must get bids for the folders.

The meeting adjourned at noon.

**Next Meeting September 5, 2023 at 9:30 AM VIA ZOOM.** (The committee will decide in September whether to resume at least some meetings in person.)